

CTAP – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Question: Explain competitive leveling in detail? Has it been done? If not, when will it be completed? We request to see the size of the pool of employees that will be used to select fill the MEO.

Answer: Competitive levels are the grouping of like positions where the duties, skills, qualifications, and training requirements are so similar that the positions are interchangeable and all employees occupying the positions can perform the work without undue interruption to the mission. The majority of competitive levels for the affected occupations have been established. The retention registers and competitive levels will be available for employees to see in early April 2005.

2. Question: What training is reflected in our PD's/competitive levels? What types of training can be added?

Answer: Some PD's may include desired training. We are not updating Position Descriptions at this time; however, employees may describe their additional experience, education and/or training by submitting a resume. A sample format is available through @LaRC at the OHR web site.

3. Question: Was the re-writing of the position descriptions at the Center done to reduce the size of the pool of affected employees? If not, has it reduced the size?

Answer: No. Any rewriting of position descriptions was done to better describe the work being performed and not to impact the size of the pool of affected employees.

4. Question: Are Within Grade increases frozen with all other personnel actions as mentioned to begin on January 31, 2005?

Answer: No

5. Question: Explain grade and pay retention. What will the parameters be for grade and pay retention in the MEO?

Answer: As the name implies, grade retention means that for pay and other purposes, you retain the grade held before the effective date of the change to lower grade. Grade retention lasts for two years, beginning with the date of change to lower grade. You keep the higher grade even though working in a lower grade position.

An employee whose grade retention period ends may receive pay retention. Pay retention means you keep your former rate of pay. In RIF, this occurs **(1)** when the period of grade retention ends, or **(2)** when the employee affected by the RIF

does not meet the eligibility requirements for grade retention (such as serving less than 52 weeks at higher grades).

Pay retention lasts until the employee's pay rate catches up to an actual step rate in the grade to which he/she is placed.

6. Question: Has any mock RIF been conducted to date? If not, when? Will we be able to see any of the results?

Answer: No. We do not intend to conduct a mock RIF.

7. Question: If an employee is offered a position in the MEO and turns it down, what happens next? May such an employee be placed in another position at the Center by RIF procedure? Can employees RIF'd into the MEO (if future RIFs occur) lose their position?

Answer: If an employee is offered a position in the MEO (or elsewhere on the Center) based on a specific RIF offer and turns it down, they will probably be separated. An employee's entitlements will be explained in a specific RIF offer. An employee is entitled to only one offer. However, if a better offer becomes available on or before the RIF effective date, then the employee is entitled to the better offer. If there are future RIF's, the same process will be followed and employees could again be affected.

8. Question: Identify the list of all federal regulations/documentation used in conducting A-76, RIF and decisions made by management/OHR in determining these actions.

Answer: OMB Circular A-76, Federal Acquisition Regulation, NASA FAR Supplement and Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 351 (reduction in force procedures) are the primary regulations.

9. Question: Will we be able to view the entire winning proposal submitted in the competition? When?

Answer: We are checking on this and will advise you soon of the answer.

10. Question A. Do the position descriptions/competitive levels of the current directly affected employees differ from other GS-802 technicians formally working in BLD.1225 in what was known as the Fabrication Technology Area? Other GS-802's from BLD.1225 no longer in "FAB"? Will those employees be included in the RIF process used to fill the MEO? Or will all GS-802s be included in the RIF process used to fill the MEO?

Question B. Will the RIF process to staff the MEO be among those physically in building 1225 only? Those with the same position descriptions and skill levels

but are not assigned to building 1225? Or between all series 802 technicians on Langley Research Center?

Answer: There are no uniform 802 position descriptions. As a minimum, competitive levels are defined by title, series, and grade, as well as special skill requirements and licenses required to perform the work. A careful analysis is performed to ensure that the positions are similar enough that employees occupying the positions within each competitive level can perform the work without undue interruption of the mission. Position descriptions are not written based on what building a person is assigned to. At this point in the process, HR analyses have been broadly made to include any occupational series that may be impacted. Therefore, we've issued RIF informational notices to employees occupying those positions that may be impacted.

11. Question: Were any position descriptions/competitive levels re-written in order to exempt any employees from a RIF? Why or why not?

Answer: No. Any rewriting of position descriptions was done to better describe the work being performed. New position descriptions for positions in the MEO have been written to cover their duties and responsibilities in the new organization. These new position descriptions were included in the Agency Tender (proposal).

12. Question: When will equipment, software, and other resources be purchased for the MEO? When will the new equipment for the MEO arrive?

Answer: As soon as possible. These purchases are being worked now. Equipment receipt will be as soon as the manufacturers can provide them.

13. Question: When will training begin?

Answer: Training for the Work Management System will begin soon. Other training will occur commencing in mid-April.

14. Question: Can employees be placed in an organization of much lower grade potential than they currently work in? Are there any other options available?

Answer: If an employee's best offer under RIF is to a lower graded position they will have the opportunity to accept or reject it. However, if they turn down a best offer, then they will probably be involuntarily separated.

Each employee has a range of grades within which he/she is considered for placement. The ceiling or top of this range is each employee's present grade. The bottom or floor of the range is three grades or three grade intervals below the present grade. What that floor is for you depends upon the type of position you

have. Examples are discussed in the Employee's Guide to Reduction in Force available on the OHR website

15. Question: Who will be in charge of "hiring and firing" of MEO employees? What authority will this person have in regards to personnel action? How will below standard employees be replaced?

Answer: MEO employees remain civil service employees; thus, civil servant management will be responsible for hiring, firing, and personnel actions. The NASA civil service performance appraisal and disciplinary systems will be used.

16. Question: Is this RIF designed to fill the MEO or will it also be used to displace other un-funded technicians?

Answer: The current action is triggered by the requirement to implement the MEO. That is the scope of the current action. This RIF is to staff the MEO.

17. Question: Recently the potential for all 802 technicians at LaRC was upgraded to the GS-11 level. Since some of the technicians that will be placed in the MEO will be working at grade levels less than the GS-11 potential will they still be classified as 802 technicians?

Answer: All but two of the new position descriptions included in the Agency Tender for the MEO were GS-802 Engineering Technicians. The positions were classified at the appropriate level to perform the work. (The other two positions were a coop student and a GS-13 AST project manager). The MEO will be staffed with GS-8 through GS-12 802 Engineering Technicians. There are no career ladder positions.

18. Question: Since being funded or unfunded is a fluid condition, will this be used as a criterion for staffing the MEO?

Answer: No.

19. Question: Will the MEO Technicians be Federal Wage System or Special Salary Rate positions?

Answer: They will be General Schedule positions.

20. Question: If you are in a RIF status, can you still retire?

Answer: Yes.

21. Question: What happens in the next three to five years, now that the MEO has won the competition? Will the MEO be required to re-compete with outside contractors? Can the MEO "contract" be cut short of the three-year term due to

budget constraints? Can the "contract" be cut short for any reason other than non-performance?

Answer: The base period of the Letter of Obligation is three years, followed by two one-year options. The options will be exercised if there is a continuing need for the services and if performance has been satisfactory. The OMB Circular requires a re-competition every five years unless a waiver is granted from the Competitive Sourcing Official for a high performing organization. However, the 2004 Appropriations Act no longer requires an Agency to automatically re-compete the services after five years. We will make a decision with regard to the necessity for a re-competition at a later time.

22. Question: Can an outside agency pay for any RIFed employees and allow them to stay in their current jobs?

Answer: No, in the RIF process an employee's qualifications and standing on a retention register determine their entitlements.

23. Question: When will the CTAP Office open and when will employees be given ICTAP status?

Answer: OHR has opened the CTAP office. We are finalizing a space and equipment and will publicize the location as soon as it is available. ICTAP eligibility will not be effective until an employee receives a specific RIF notice. We anticipate these notices will be sent out in early April 2005.

24. Question: Will RIF numbers/actions be based on current budget needs/requirements or projected future needs? (ie proposed '06 budget) If yes, how can this be done?

Answer: No. The current action is required to implement the decision for the A-76 procurement. The number of people in the MEO was proposed in the Agency Tender (proposal).

25. Question: Will the MEO 2nd shift be "as needed" or "full time"?

Answer: The Agency Tender proposed a second shift staffed with full-time permanent employees.

26. Question: The RIF notices dated January 31, state a "Center wide RIF affecting GS-13 positions and below". What series(s) are these positions?

Answer: Reduction in Force (RIF) procedures require us to identify all employees that may be affected. After reviewing the personnel records of the directly affected employees it became apparent that the possibility existed for the RIF rules to affect employees in other than technician positions. This is because

the work history and experience of the directly affected employees allows them to potentially move into other work areas. Since the potential exists for assignment rights into Administrative Professional, Secretarial and Clerical positions, individuals occupying those positions at grade GS-9 and below also received general RIF notices.